House to Probe U.S. Funds for Nixon, Agnew Homes

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A House investigation was ordered yesterday into federal funds spent on homes owned by President Nixon and Vice President Agnew.

The investigation will be conducted by a House Government Operations subcommittee headed by Rep. Jack Brooks (D-Tex.). Brooks said that, while he recognizes the need to protect the President and Vice President, "any expenditures that are essentially for improvements that any homeowner might routinely have to undertake should not be paid for out of taxpayers' funds under the guise of security protection."

In a separate action, Rep. Edward Koch (D-N.Y.) asked the Internal Revenue Service for a report on whether non-security federal improvements to the Nixon and Agnew homes should be considered income to them and subject to taxation. Koch said he believed it should.

It recently was made public that the General Services Administration spent at least $1.3 million in improvements to President Nixon's homes in California and Florida and will pay $125,000 for improvements to a home Mr. Agnew has bought in suburban Kenwood, Md. GSA listed the costs as for security to protect the two officials and their families.

The items for the President's properties included a beach cabana, swimming pool heater and septic tank repairs. Items for the Agnew house include air conditioning and carpeting.

Brooks said the spending of large sums of public money for "improvements on private property is a matter of grave concern to the American people."

Brooks said he will hold public hearings after his subcommittee has examined documents now being collected detailing the improvements made. Federal agencies have also been asked to provide information on such expenditures in previous administrations, Brooks said.

In addition to requesting an IRS study of tax liability for such improvements, Koch also introduced a bill barring future government expenditures on private presidential and vice presidential properties without congressional approval.

"No one opposes security needs," said Koc, "but creature comforts should not come out of the treasury."

Rep. Peter W. Rodino (D-N.J.), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, said he will introduce a bill to prevent a repetition of John N. Mitchell's moving from his role as Mr. Nixon's campaign manager to Attorney General and then back to campaign manager. Rodino's bill would require a two-year interval before a person could move from either job to the other.

Rodino said Mitchell's testimony this week before the Senate Watergate committee ""demonstrated that the political influences in the Department of Justice are becoming too powerful and must be controlled . . . If Congress does not act, it will only strengthen the convictions of too many Americans that the use of law enforcement facilities for partisan political purposes is the rule rather than the exception."

The late Robert F. Kennedy was also a top political adviser to President Kennedy as well as his Attorney General.